

# Ron Paul Steals the Show at Faith and Freedom Conference

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By Doug Wead

Ron Paul surprised delegates at the Faith and Freedom Coalition conference last week by quoting long portions of the Bible to buttress his political views. Mitt Romney, Michele Bachmann, Tim Pawlenty, and most of the other GOP presidential hopefuls showed up at the event.

Ralph Reed addresses the Faith and Freedom conference (AP) The Faith and Freedom Coalition is organized by Ralph Reed and is referred to by some as the new Christian Coalition.

But while some of the speakers stumbled uncomfortably over Christian buzzwords, likely supplied by their handlers, and other speakers ignored the special character of their audience altogether, Ron Paul launched into a scriptural defense of his views.

Paul reminded his audience of the Biblical story of 1 Samuel chapter 8 when the Israelites demanded a king and God warned them what would happen. They would be burdened with taxation and the king would take their sons away to die in distant wars.

"I don't think we need a king," Paul told the audience, "and we don't need Washington to act as if they're the king of this country."

His speech evoked the largest applause and cheers of the day.

Ron Paul's recent appearance and the reaction of his audience reflect a

Ron Paul growing trend among evangelicals who see the erosion of the constitutional right of freedom of religion to be the new threat.

"This is no longer about Christians trying to force prayer in schools or an end to abortion," a famous televangelist told me.

"While we have been busy talking about those things we have had the constitution stolen right before our eyes. This is now about whether or not we have the right to worship freely. The battle is now over the constitution itself," he added.

Last year Ron Paul was criticized by some Christian leaders for defending the rights of Muslims to build a mosque in New York City. Libertarians, who defend the congressman, point out that less than 1 percent of the American population is Islamic. 76 percent are Christians.

If the government is given the power to decide where and when a house of worship can be built, then the Christians, not the Muslims, will suffer most.

In recent years, Christian pastors and denominational leaders have grown frustrated as state and county governments use zoning boards to block the construction of new churches, keeping the land on the property tax rolls. In some of the largest counties in America, a new Christian church cannot be built.

"More and more Christians are seeing the critical importance of Ron Paul's message," says Brian Jacobs, a former consultant for the Billy Graham organization. "If we compromise the Constitution, even to promote something we want, in the long run, we are undercutting ourselves."

Jacobs helped arrange the meeting between Billy Graham and George W. Bush in Jacksonville, Fla., the day before the national election in 2000. Jacobs is now actively supporting Ron Paul's candidacy.

Bill Spiegel, a former member of the Senior Bush President's Economic Council and the Southern Baptist Liaison for George H. W. Bush, says, "Much of the money that was going to evangelical lobbies in Washington is now going to Ron Paul. And the Christian leaders in Washington have been taken by surprise.

"It is because the people are seeing what the leaders are missing. They don't want power; they want to be left alone to worship in freedom and Ron Paul is the only candidate who is defending that right consistently."

Ron Paul shared with the Christian activist audience his own experience as an OB doctor, delivering more than 4,000 babies. And why he supports Right to Life.

"Let me tell you," the congressman said, "life does begin at conception."

Perhaps his biggest applause came when he told the audience, "We have, as a people, lost our confidence and our understanding of what true liberty is all about and where it comes from. It doesn't come from the government. Our liberties come from our creator."

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